

The 2019 Season - Slow start yet recent rain pushes up estimates

The majority of the Western Australian grainbelt is now in good shape and most areas could achieve average grain yields if the rain keeps up. For the northern half of the state it will need to be a soft finish to hit average grain yields as the crops are very late for this time of the year. The southern areas have generally less subsoil moisture and are behind their ideal growth stage, although the chances of a soft finish are greater moving closer to the southern regions, and most growers are looking forward to at least average grain yields.

Crops were very slow to emerge and most cereals that germinated on the opening rains in June are only just starting to tiller. The emergence of cereals has been excellent in most cases and weed control from the pre-emergent herbicides very good for all crops. Canola has really struggled in the central and northern areas and has only just started to pile on true leaves in the last week. Crops in regions where there were light rainfall events in May, and subsequent crops which sprouted and sat in the ground until the main break in June, came up patchy and are more staggered in growth stage than later sown crops. This is more evident as you move south to the south coastal regions where some canola is only just emerging and some cereals are flowering with anywhere from early tillering to first node.

Due to the pattern of rainfall events to date, the south eastern areas of the state radiating out from Ravensthorpe are again light on for rain and whilst the crops are up, it is the only area of the state that has not achieved average or above average rainfall since the break of the season in June.

The turnaround in predicted planted areas from last month's report has been greater than expected. Paddocks that were held back due to little or no rain up until the end of May due to the uncertainty of the season and weed control risk, mostly ended up being planted. The majority of the later sown paddocks have gone to wheat and whilst some of the heavier country was left out to pasture, most growers opted to go ahead with their planned seeding programs.

The drop off in canola area this year looks to be as predicted and the increase in barley looks to have eventuated as well.

GIWA Western Australia Crop Area Estimates July 2019 (hectares)

Port zone	Wheat	Barley	Canola	Oat	Lupins	Pulses	State total
Kwinana	2,600,000	770,000	400,000	170,000	120,000	6,000	4,066,000
Albany	520,000	680,000	210,000	160,000	40,000	8,000	1,618,000
Esperance	500,000	380,000	165,000	10,000	10,000	35,000	1,100,000
Geraldton	960,000	120,000	220,000	10,000	180,000	4,000	1,494,000
Totals	4,580,000	1,950,000	995,000	350,000	350,000	53,000	8,278,000
% change to June	7.0%	2.1%	-	-	-	-	4.3%

GIWA gratefully acknowledges the support of DPIRD, CBH, CSIRO and contributions from independent agricultural consultants and agronomists in the production of this report.

Geraldton Zone

Crops are late in the northern agricultural zones and it is going to need to be a soft finish to return greater than average grain yields for cereals. Rain over the last few days has contributed to the medium and higher rainfall zones now having a “bucket” to assist in finishing crops in the spring, this drops off moving east. Cereal emergence has been very good as most were sown dry and the break of the season came with nice steady falls of rain over several days. This assisted in the very good early weed control from the pre-emergent herbicides. Most growers are fertilising for long term average cereal grain yields. Canola is mostly only just at two true leaves and has a long way to go to hit 1.0T/ha.

There is more crop sown in the region than reported last month. Growers that stopped sowing dry with 20 to 30 per cent of their programs to go, cranked up following the very good opening rains and most ended up planting their original intended area to crop. Canola and lupin areas are down from 2018 and barley is up slightly. Most of the country sown after the break was wheat.

Kwinana Zone

Kwinana North Midlands

The North Midlands region of the state received the good general rains in early June. The cereal crops on the medium and heavier soils emerged very well and have at least average grain yield potential. Lighter soils were wind-blown prior to the rain and have suffered with furrow fill and some herbicide damage from the soil movement. Crops on the lighter country are patchier as a result and currently have lower than average yield potential.

Canola has below grain yield potential due to being late and suffering slow uneven emergence. Canola area in the state is down from last year and areas away from the south coast and West Albany regions are going to be far from average grain yields unless the spring is mild and the rain keeps coming.

The western regions of the zone to date have not suffered from the waterlogging that can often cap grain yields and moving east in the zone, most of the intended area of cereal has gone in. There has been a significant increase in crop area planted from last month's report due to the good rainfall and continued rain since the break.

Kwinana West

Whilst crops are late most growers are faced with at least average cereal yields and the recent rain has improved chances of this significantly. The majority of the region has received another 25 to 30mm in the last 24 hours adding to sub-soil reserves. All crops were very slow to get away and even those sown dry in early May that germinated and sat there until the June break were initially very slow to get going. Most crops are more than two weeks behind last year in growth stage at the same time last year, although in this region, crops can make up ground in the spring due to a greater chance of finishing rains than further east.

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Cereals have an average yield potential although canola in the region is well down on potential at this stage of the season. The canola area is back by around 20 per cent from last year with most of the substitution going to wheat. Lupin area is similar to 2018.

Disease pressure has been low up until now and grass weed control very good from the steady soaking rains at the break of the season. Early post-emergent weed control has also been very good due to the soft growing conditions and regular rain.

Kwinana North-East

Cereals in the eastern areas of the Kwinana zone are on track for average grain yields. Most of the region had small reserves of sub-soil moisture when the break arrived and now with average or above average rain in June the potential is there if the rain keeps falling. The area of fallow is back on earlier predictions with planted area now up to originally planned hectares. Once growers got going on the remaining paddocks not sown dry following the rain in early June, most elected to complete their planned seeding programs. With grain prices reasonable and the greater percentage of crop in this region sown to wheat, the good start gave growers confidence to continue with seeding even though it was a little later than ideal.

With the good general rain over the last 24 hours most areas in the region have had close to 100mm since the break with many areas 20mm or more of sub-soil moisture on top of this. Wheat can yield 2T/ha on 160mm in the region. Whilst crops have a long way to go it is looking “pretty good” at the moment for most of the zone.

As evident on the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) Plant Available Soil Moisture map, areas around Beacon and east of Meriden show good soil moisture reserves.

The break crop area, particularly canola is down on previous years and those paddocks sown to canola were very slow to emerge and have below average grain yield potential.

Albany Zone

Albany West

The region is in very good shape with growers commenting they are fertilising for above average grain yields. Some of the earlier sown cereals have finished tillering and are starting to lift. The emergence of crops was very good with even plant stands across paddocks and good plant density. There is no waterlogging in the susceptible areas just yet which can be a dampener on yield in the zone. The more growth crops can put on now, the better they are able to handle waterlogging and grow away from it in the spring. A lot of early nitrogen has been applied since the break and this has assisted with crop growth in the cold growing conditions. Leaf disease is just starting to get going in barley with most crops being sprayed recently or soon to be sprayed.

The barley area is up slightly from last year continuing to be substituted for wheat. The canola and oat areas are similar to 2018.

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Albany South

The west and southern areas of region are in very good shape with crops well advanced with most average to above average potential. Rainfall has been lighter in the northern and eastern areas of the region and crop potential really tapers off east of the Pallinup River. Crops to the north in the southern Lakes District and Western Esperance zone have missed out on the good opening rains that the rest of the state received. Crops in these areas have emerged well considering the conditions, although will need more rain than what came their way in the last 24 hours to reach average grain yields.

Crops in the western and coastal parts of the region are well advanced with cereal tiller numbers indicating in excess of 6T/ha for barley. Canola crops are starting to flower and most have bulked up well prior to flowering indicating good yield potential.

Crops are generally very clean with the earlier crops getting the jump on grass weeds. Net blotch in barley is just starting to get going on the tighter rotations with most growers holding off with their first fungicide application until now.

With crops emerging in May followed by warm conditions, the break in June then brought the cold resulting in a noticeable wide differentiation in barley maturity with some varieties like Rosalind bolting to first node stage. Planet and Flinders were in the transition between tillering and reproductive stage and Banks is still happily tillering away.

Albany East (Lakes Region)

The rainfall in the region has followed a similar pattern as 2018 with a gradient of decreasing rainfall from north to south. The region has very little stored moisture from rainfall events in April and May and whilst the recent rain in the last day or so will go a little way in filling the profile, the region is going to need a good season from now to reach average grain yields. Crops are later than growers would like for this time of the year and most cereals are just at the three leaf stage now. Crops were very slow to get out of the ground as they were across most of the state. Crop emergence was a little patchy and staggered with weed control from the pre-emergent herbicides and not as brilliant as further north in the state, this reflects the lighter rainfall to date. Cereal crops sown prior to the opening rains in June are cleaner than those sown just after the rain as grass weeds got the jump on emerging crops without a knockdown spray.

Barley area is up in the region replacing both canola area and wheat. The pasture area is slightly up as growers opted to keep more country out of crop in this region for stock feed. As previously reported the barley area this year will exceed wheat for the first time in history.

Esperance Zone

The majority of the region east of Cascades is looking good at the moment. Generally, the cereal crop emergence is better than last year where the strong winds and patchy rainfall at the start, significantly impacted on plant density. The best crops are east of Cascades to Scadden and across to Condinup. Some areas around Salmon Gums and north of Cascades have also received good falls of rain from isolated events. Rainfall has been lighter north of Condinup and west of Cascades with areas around Munglinup the “epicentre” of low rainfall for the state so far this year.

The central and eastern regions of the Esperance zone received useful falls of rain in May to germinate crops and the rain in June has pushed crops along to be well ahead of the regions in the central and north

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of the state. Canola is flowering and early cereals are at first node stage. Pastures have been very slow as they have for most of the state and stock feed has been tight.

The western areas of the zone around Ravensthorpe and north to Lake King have been very light on and is one of the few areas of the state that has not equalled or exceeded their average June rainfall. The rain yesterday again struggled to push east to these areas with lower totals of less than 20mm received in the areas that needed it the most. The rain also dropped off in the majority of the Esperance region as you go east and these areas will be looking for more rain soon to keep crops on track for average grain yields.

Disease in crops is only just starting to ramp up with the first applications of fungicides for net blotch and powdery mildew going on in the last week. Pulses have been pretty clean to date. Red legged earth mites have caught a few growers out with mass hatchings following the cool temperatures and rain in June. Canola aphids have not caused the same problems as last year on early emerging plants and even though some of the later crops are not out of the woods yet, the cooler temperatures mean the risk is less as is the ability of aphids to build up numbers quickly is reduced.

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Season Outlook, July 2019

Ian Foster, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

DPIRD climate summary

Rain for June was well above average for much of the northern and eastern agricultural area, near-average for much of the South West, and still below average for parts of the South Coast. Seasonal rain since April remains well below average across the wider region. Soil moisture in the root zone remains below average across the South Coast, though is now above average for the northern agricultural area, see Figure 1.

Seasonal rainfall outlooks from Australian and international models indicate July to September rainfall is more likely to be below normal for much southern Western Australia. A positive Indian Ocean Dipole event is expected to continue from June onwards. Combined with predictions of higher than normal atmospheric pressure over Australia, is associated with below normal rainfall over much of Australia.

Bureau of Meteorology seasonal outlook summary

- The July to September climate outlook, issued 27 June 2019, suggests a drier than average three months is likely for large parts of Australia.
- July to September daytime temperatures are likely to be warmer than average, except for southern WA and parts of northern Queensland.
- Much of the southern mainland has roughly equal chances of warmer or cooler nights. With more cloud-free days and nights expected, there is an increased risk of frost in susceptible areas.
- Climate influences include a positive Indian Ocean Dipole and a continued weakening of El Niño-like patterns in the tropical Pacific Ocean. The state of these climate drivers mean higher pressures are more likely over southern and eastern Australia, reducing cloud formation and keeping cold fronts further south than usual.

Additional information can be sourced from:

[DPIRD: Seasonal Climate Information](#)

[DPIRD: Soil Water Tool](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Rainfall Outlook, next 3 months](#)

[BoM: Decile rainfall for April to June 2019](#)

[BoM: Seasonal Outlook video](#)

[BoM: Landscape soil water balance](#)

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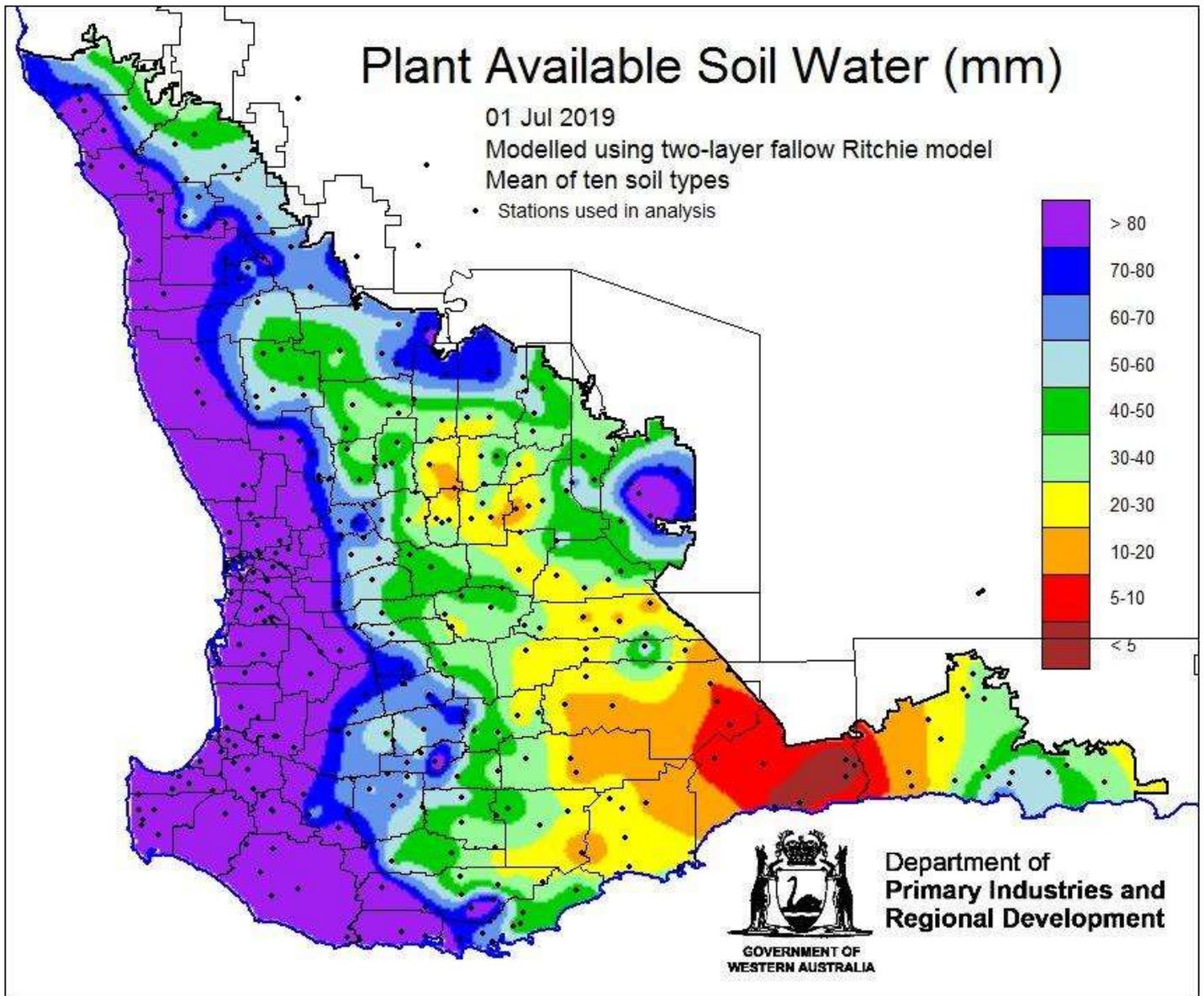


Figure 1. Estimated plant available soil water at 1 July 2019, using rainfall from November 2018 to date. The model assumes a fallow water balance and is an average of ten typical soil types. Soil water storage in forested areas will be an over-estimate of actual values. From DPIRD.

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